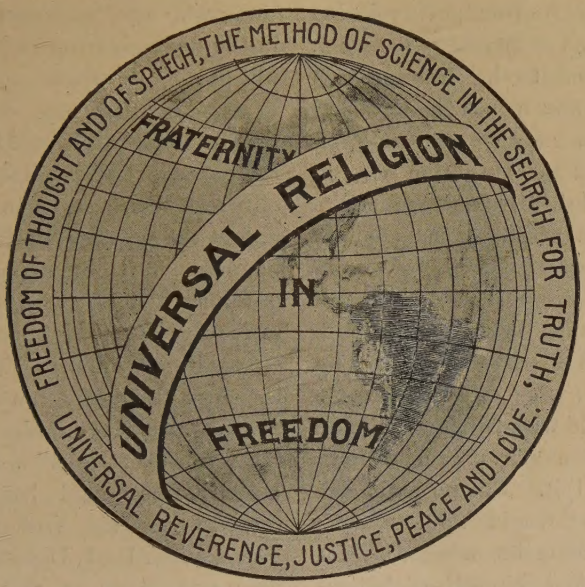
Universal Religion

[Successor to The Free Church Record.]

Vol. IX. Tacoma and Seattle, March, 1901. No. 3.



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This monthly is published from October to June in the interests of the new religious fellowship whose boundaries are as broad as humanity and whose principles are as universal as the universe.

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Entered at the post-office as second class matter.

UNITARIANISM, AND WHY IT FAILS TO SATISFY

(Concluded.)

ALFRED W. MARTIN.

The struggle for freedom in religion was not closed at Saratoga in 1894. I, for one, wish to be free enough to say I am not a "Christian" and that I cannot "accept the religion of Jesus" and no Unitarian church can grant that freedom while the denomination stands committed to its present test.

When a progressive Unitarian minister tells his congregation that he has all the liberty he wants, he forgets that, the day MAY come when he would wish to be free enough to make these affirmations without losing his pulpit. But no Unitarian church to-day would tolerate such confessions from its minister. He would soon find himself disfellowshiped and very properly, because the denomination has committed itself to a creedlet while seeming to stand for perfect freedom of thought. It matters very little whether it be a creed or a creedlet, an iron cable or a silken cord that binds a man, if he be bound he is bound and the shout of freedom breaks no chain. Nothing in my discussions with Unitarian ministers has impressed me so strongly as the arguments by which they who sympathize with our creedless position seek to justify their continued connection with the Unitarian body. It would be idle to rehearse the various pleas and forms of justification they have urged, but of one in particular a word must be said. It is the argument of those who say "we insist on staying in the denomination until we are put out." Is such an argument in keeping with the ethics of religious association? Does it not rather savor of intellectual immorality? When a man does not accept the position which a sect has unanimously adopted at the close of a long historic struggle, it seems to me that there is but one honorable thing for him to do,—to leave it. Any Unitarian church, or individual, that is unable to "accept the religion of Jesus" is false to the Unitarian flag and has no moral right to bear the Unitarian name. The standard of Unitarian Orthodoxy was flung to the breeze six years ago, its motto was inscribed in bold, unmistakable characters; between that flag and uncompromised freedom every soul must choose. Religious teachers, of all men, should be the last to exhibit that paralysis of social consciousness which settles questions of duty irrespective of denominational standards and declarations. To say, as some still do, that the phrase "religion of Jesus" is "ambiguous and has virtue on that account;" to slur over the defining clause and fix attention only on the liberating

clause is a very sorry yet very common practice among Unitarians. And is it not identical with the sort of fault for which they censure certain of their Orthodox brethren, who also take unwarranted liberties with their own confessions of faith? It has been said by more than one Unitarian minister, that the phrase "religion of Jesus" was used in the preamble to "capture the conservatives" (to whom it stands for certain definite ideas) and simultaneously the "radicals," who will "tolerate it." Now 'tis just this very ambiguity that offends the moral sense, precisely as did the introduction of the word "coin" into a political platform, since it may mean either silver or gold and so secure votes from both parties.

Just here the question may be interposed, can you not accept the religion of Jesus? I answer no, only in part, and that a very small part. The spiritual purity of Jesus, his white-minded sincerity, his all-embracing sympathy, his unsurpassed consecration to a transcendently glorious life-purpose,—all these characteristics that make his name a synonym for inspiration and that draw forth the sentiments of admiration and reverence, all these I gratefully recognize, but I can only accept that fraction of his religion which modern scholarship warrants me in accepting. Every religion consists in its entirety of thought, feeling and conduct. The religion of Jesus on its thought-side contains ideas of God and man, of earth and heaven, of human origin and destiny which modern knowledge has completely outgrown.* Furthermore, whosoever believes in Universal Religion thereby affirms that he accepts the religion, not of Jesus, nor of Buddha, nor of Socrates, nor of any other founder, but only of universal Man; the religion which honors each of the great religious prophets according to the truths he has taught, the purity of his spirit and the good he has achieved. He who accepts universal religion cannot accept any one teacher as his sole master in the art of spiritual living. No one prophet or teacher can meet all the sides of our complex human nature; no one man can ever serve as the absolute ideal for humanity.

Equally impossible is it for me to accept the Unitarian statement that "practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man." Any summary of religion that leaves out TRUTH and RIGHT is seriously defective. "Love," says Dr. Savage, "is only the heart of a religion, but to know what to love and how to love we need the light of the intellect and the results of experience."† Thought, as a guide and conduct,

*"Jesus and modern life" pp. 224-5. by M. J. Savage, D. D.

†"Evolution of Christianity" pp. 176-7.

as the goal, must enter into any true summing up of practical religion. And the fatal defect in the religion of Jesus is that it emphasizes the sentimental to the exclusion of the intellectual. Love indeed is the divinest power we possess, but to secure the best that love can accomplish it must be guided by wisdom and truth. Unwise love, thought-less love; of what evils have not these been the root! When, therefore, Unitarianism affirms that "practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man" it puts, as Dr. Abbot has said, a part "of the human ideal for the whole which includes not only "love" but truth and righteousness as well"*

Nor again will it do to identify the doctrines of love to God and love to man with Jesus ALONE, as though they were his in any exclusive sense, or as though they defined Christianity in contradistinction from other religions. These doctrines are older than Christianity and all the great religions of the world culminate on their practical side in love to God and love to man.

Even Buddhism, commonly branded atheistic, entertains sentiments corresponding to these two loves, as the researches of Dr. Carus testify. Consequently Unitarianism states less than the full truth when it leaves out the other great prophets of the past who taught love to God and love to man.

But I would go a step further still and say that even if I could "accept the religion of Jesus," even if I did believe that "practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man" I would not insert either belief into the bond of union of a free religious organization which Unitarianism professes to be. I would not set up even the semblance of a test but scrupulously omit every phrase that has a limiting tendency. Deep as is my belief in God I would not have even that word in the basis of fellowship because I find thoughtful, earnest men who cannot say that they "love God" in any of the usual senses of the phrase, and any organization that shuts out such souls on that account has not yet extended its fellowship to the ideal limit. At the present stage of religious inquiry, with the great questions of theism and immortality still open, there should not be a vestige of theology in the basis of fellowship. Strange, is it not, that there should be any unconsciousness on the part of any Unitarians of the theology that still stands in their national constitution. Yet such unconsciousness we find, in Rev. George Batchelor, for instance, who says, "we need not trouble ourselves about theological statements;"* and again, (I say it most respectfully)

*Free Church Record vol. II p. 231.

*Unity Pulpit vol. 17. No. 7 p 13.

in Dr. Savage, who declared that "there is not a word said of theology in the statement of the Unitarian position;"† and again, in an editorial of the Christian Register which affirms that "Unitarians have the advantage which comes from complete mental liberty, they are not committed to holding some creedal fort which ought to be abandoned, for they are not fenced in by articles, standards, confessions"*

So free from even "the shadow of a test" must the ideal basis of fellowship be that even the word God may not have a place in it. Belief in God, or, in love to God, is not an undebatable proposition. There are no undebatable propositions, at present, in the realm of religion. Indeed, every belief is a HUMAN affirmation and as such is subject to amendment or rejection.

I believe in God with all my soul; I regard the theistic as the only satisfactory theory of the universe, yet nothing could ever induce me to join a church whose bond of union contains a profession of faith in God. Why? Because I desire that the same freedom which is my privilege shall be equally the privilege of others. Make the belief in God, or, in love to God, a condition of membership and instantly all thoughtful souls who hold a non-theistic theory of the universe are excluded, and I will belong to no organization that interferes with the free exercise of human intelligence by imposing theism, or any other belief, as a qualification necessary for membership.

Deep as may be our faith in God let us not insult humanity by refusing to recognize the honest thought of those who are not theists. Rather let us say to them: Come, let us meet on the common ground of our humanity and by means of our common freedom of thought determine, if possible, which of us is mistaken; for we both love the truth and earnestly seek it, conscious that nothing but the truth can give us the peace we crave. Such is the spirit of every genuinely free organization. It is not afraid of sincere thought, but treats all as equals by welcoming to its fellowship all who would unite in the free search for truth and in unselfish service. Important as your or my private opinions may be, they are far less important than that spirit of tolerance and generous regard for others' rights which refuses to set up, or leave up, any fence that keeps apart those who ought to be united.

Inasmuch then as the latest official statement of the Unitarian position, given out to the world at the National Conference six years ago, contains, besides the profession

†Unity May, 25th, 1895.
*Christian Register Nov. 7th 1895.

of freedom, a creedlet of three articles—love to God, the religion of Jesus, the Christian name,—thus NULLIFYING the significance of the freedom-clause and LIMITING the terms of fellowship, Unitarianism falls short of that religious ideal which alone can satisfy free souls.

And now, in accordance with the positive and constructive purpose of this series of discourses, let me offer the following provisional substitute for the unsatisfying, disfellowshiping preamble and first article of the Unitarian constitution, keeping as close as possible to its form of statement:

PREAMBLE.

This Conference of independent societies, or free churches, is formed for strengthening its constituent units in the sublime task of building on freedom, truth, justice and love, the commonwealth of man. These united societies accept the religion of universal Man which pays due homage to Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus and all other prophets according to the amount of truth they teach and the inspiration their lives afford.

These societies hold that practical religion is summed up in the effort of Man, guided by free thought and moved by love of the Ideal, to perfect himself in all his relations.

ART I.

These organizations here represented unite themselves in a common body to be known as the "National Conference of Independent religious societies."

In some such phraseology will the coming National Conference of strictly free churches, or independent societies, express the ideal terms of fellowship and co-operation. What I want, what we of this Society stand for and are working for, is a genuinely universal fellowship in religion, a union of all free souls who wish to "live upward towards truth of thought, which is knowledge; upward towards truth of feeling, which in its highest form is love; upward towards truth of conduct, which is virtue–fulfilment of duty;" * a fellowship that shall know nothing of sectarian rivalries and jealousies but plant itself on that noblest of all endeavors, the effort to evolve individual and social human nature to their highest ideal; a fellowship that shall unite men, not in the bonds of Confucian or Mohammedan or Christian love, but in the holier bonds of HUMAN love; going down, beneath all that separates and estranges, to the bottom principles of freedom and love; below religions to religion; beneath all sacraments, to the universal impulse that bends the soul in reverence and awe; beneath all forms, to the faith that strives to express itself in and through them; beneath all historic authorities, to the ultimate authority

*F. E. Abbot in The Free Church Record, January, 1899.

of universal human reason and conscience; thus touching common foundations and securing a common fellowship, each helping the other by whatsoever his deeper insight may reveal; a union, not of religious systems, but of free souls, united to build up, on the basis of truth, justice and love, the divine Commonwealth of Man.

Plainly then, it is something more than the Unitarian name with which we are dissatisfied. Nothing would have been more short-sighted, petty and silly than to organize this independent Society simply because we did not like the Unitarian name. No, not the name, but what the name stands for in the proclamation at Saratoga, is the seat of our dissatisfaction. Mr. Gannett may tell us that the name "connotes a method and a spirit;" Dr. Savage may reiterate that it means "the unity of the universe and the unity of mankind,"but over against all such individual explanations stands the collective declaration of the denomination, voiced in national assembly, stating what the name stands for.

And since we stand for something different it would not do for us to keep the Unitarian name, however inadequate our substitute might prove to be. "The June rose" it is true, "does not shed its April name," because that which makes it a rose inheres in it at both seasons; but when a different species has been evolved, it deserves a new name. When in the course of organic evolution that which was reptile became bird, it did not continue to be known by a reptilian name, but properly acquired a new name to represent its new characteristics. So when in the course of religious evolution that which was Christian became universal or unsectarian, and that which accepted the religion of Jesus came to accept the religion of universal Man and that which offered limited terms of fellowship made them cosmopolitan, - the advance ought to be indicated by a new name. "What's in a name," asked Shakspere, and common sense replies, a great deal; because it is a proclamation, in brief, of the object of the institution named and, in the case of Unitarianism, so long as the words "Christian" and "religion of Jesus" remain in the National Conference Constitution, so long must the name "Unitarian" be a condensed creed. There was but one honorable course for us to pursue when we determined to make our terms of fellowship truly cosmopolitan and to stand for universal religion instead of for sectarian religion, (Christianity) namely, to renounce the name Unitarian and avoid the choice of any other that had a creedal implication. It was not because we loved our Unitarian brethern less, but hu-

manity more that on Nov. 27th the Tacoma Unitarian Society was forced to withdraw from the denomination and stand apart. Secretary Samuel Eliot of the American Unitarian Association once wrote an article for the Christian Register, on "The sufficing freedom of the Unitarian movement;" but it was simply because that freedom is unsufficing that we have been disfellowshiped. The Tacoma organization had hitched its little boat to the big Unitarian steamer, but since it was obviously impossible to make the great craft go the way of the little skiff, there was no alternative but to cut the cable and manfully go its own way alone. And if in consequence of this inevitable severance, the Tacoma boat should some day capsize and sink, let the crew be consoled by two great thoughts. First, the Cause for which we sail can never be wrecked; second, it is always nobler to be in one's own boat, true to one's own colors than dragging astern the stateliest ship that hoists a different flag. Better it is to be alone with our ideal than in company with all the world and our ideal deserted and dishonored.

Finally, let us never lose sight of the belief that the progressive spirit that has inhered in Unitarianism from its birth will yet cause it to advance to a still broader basis of fellowship. Not a few of the prophetic spirits in the denomination have visions of such a forward step being taken in the near future. One of them has warned his fellow-Unitarians of the danger of looking on the Saratoga declaration of '94 as a finality. He advocates loyalty to ideals rather than to persons and institutions, because, he says, "the latter arrests development, the former promotes it."† Another prominent Unitarian preacher insists that "it is foolish for any one to think that because to-day we are exclusive, tomorrow we shall not be freer; tomorrow we almost certainly will be freer."*

May these prophetic utterances be converted into facts. May the enthusiasm generated at the Saratoga convention six years ago prove chronic and contagious and intense, until it shall have burned out every limiting excluding word in the Unitarian bond of union and fitted it to the fellowship of free, spiritual and universal religion. In this glorious consummation of Unitarianism we trust and its advent will be welcomed by none more heartily than by us who, out of loyalty to the higher ideal, were forced to organize under a new banner and a new name.

†Rev. S. M. Crothers, D. D., Christian Register Nov. 28th, 1894.

*Rev. W. C. Gannett, "Unity" Oct. 18th, 1894.

ODE TO THE FREE CHURCH WOMAN.

BY ALICE C. VAN RUYPER, A. B.

If you're anxious to win fame
In the Free Thought game,
As a thinker of independence rare,
You must dig up every myth
And investigate its pith,
For you know a germ of truth lies hidden there.
You must stand upon the rostrum
And proclaim that you've a nostrum
For getting at the truth of things—
'Tis the scientific method—
Hark, how Orthodoxy saith—"Od's Body, but your method stings!"

And every one will say,
As you go your scientific way,
"If she persists in scorning our salvation scheme,
Which is plausible enough for ME,
What a horrid, torrid, roasted, toasted, unsaved soul,
Her unsaved soul will be!"

Exercise your elocution
In explaining evolution,
Or how a monad got to be a man;
Discuss the missing link,
And make everybody think
You must have been there when the thing was planned.
Instead of crests and coats armorial,
Boast of ancestors arboreal,
As, a Pterodactyl, Anthropoidal ape;
As an all-around utensil
Celebrate the tail prehensile
For its curvilinear elegance of shape.

And every one will say,
As you go evolving on your way—
"If it's really true she came from an ape,
Which I'm certain isn't true of ME,
Why what a very complicated pedigree
Her pedigreee must be!

Proclaim it your intention
To attain the third dimension—
Not only breadth and depth, forsooth, but height!
Study Emerson and Darwin,
"Hitch your wagon to a star" win
The praise of always keeping to the right.
Apotheosize your reason;
'Ware of settling on the lees, un-
Til, at least you've tried the taste of foam!
Quote Confucius, Book of Brahma,
Zoroaster and Gautama,
And buy a copy of the Polychrome.

And every one will say,
As you go your esoteric way,
"If she can digest such strong brain-food,
Which is very much too much for ME,
Why, what a very vulgarly robust sort of mind
Her sort of mind must be!"

Then there's the problem of creation;
How to perfect your relation
With the power at the heart of things;
If you feel a brand new bent,
You know now 'tis discontent,
And that discontent 's divine, and doubt lends wings.
Though the Orthodox may jostle,
You will rank as an apostle
Of a pseudo blebtic, anti-Christian craze,
If you follow Mr. Martin
When you falter at the parting
'Twixt Science's and superstition's ways.

And every one will say,
As you go your soulful way,
"If she' content with law for a God,
Which I'm certain wouldn't satisfy ME,
Why, what a very easily satisfied soul
Her satisfied soul must be!"

MODERN OCCULTISM.

Synopses of Discourses.

Synopses of Discourses recently spoken at Tacoma and Seattle. Reports of the three preceding discourses in the series appeared in the February number.

SPIRITUALISM.

(February 3rd)

Though not a Spiritualist. I should deem it most discreditable to my intellect and heart were I indifferent to a subject that affects the hopes and fears of millions as does Spiritualism. Only bigotry and ignorance will declare that the foundations of Spiritualism are 'known to be false.' Nobody knows any such thing. On the contrary, we are confronted to-

day by facts of the most stupendous importance in their bearing on immortality, facts that bring us to the very boundary line that separates probability from demonstration.

The distinguishing doctrine of Spiritualism, that which differentiates it from other religious movements, is the belief in immortality based on the alleged fact of spirit-intercourse. This doctrine is as old as man and has entered into every historical religion at its inception. Christianity began with a vision, a voice from the unseen; and Paul, its founder, based his whole system of salvation upon a miracle involving a resurrection and an ascension. Spiritualism, however, has an advantage over Christianity in that it explains these phenomena as parts of the natural order; it brings the miraculous under the sway of law. Nay, more, the witnesses to its phenomena are living, whereas the first-hand witnesses to the Christian miracles are of unknown name and date.

Modern Spiritualism began in 1848 at Hydeville, Wayne county, New York. Here two children, Fox, by name, heard strange rappings which, it is said, brought them into communication with departed spirits who informed them that the skull of a murdered man was in the cellar of their house. In 1850 one D. D. Home reported similar phenomena, gradually others were reported and thrown into the psychic cauldron which the Fox children had set bubbling, and Spiritualism was the result.

The movement grew very rapidly. No one can tell how many adherents it has today, because they are to be found in all the Christian churches, and because hundreds have not the courage to confess their belief in the doctrine.

Its wonderful growth was due, indirectly, to the natural heart-hunger of man to know something positive about the hereafter; and, directly, to the widespread influence of two intellectual forces—materialism and criticism—both of which Spiritualism sought to overthrow. Materialism had taken all hope of a future life out of the hearts of thousands by its theory of matter; criticism had shown that the historical proofs for immortality are without a rational basis on which to stand. It challenged the thinking world to produce other proofs or else give up its belief. At this crisis Spiritualism came with its doctrine of spirit-intercourse, bidding the materialist and the critic come and see for themselves that there is positive evidence of the reality of a future life.

How natural it was that in its revolt against materialism, Spiritualism should have exaggerated its claim by saying that ALL psychic phenomena were due to the agency of

invisible intelligences. Just here, it was, that the work of the Psychical Research society proved to be of special value, for it demonstrated that the great majority of these phenomena can be explained without any reference whatever to departed spirits. This took some of the "shine" out of Spiritualism. But there remains a certain group of phenomena not thus accounted for. Are these to be explained by the spiritualistic hypothesis? Prof. A. R. Wallace. Prof. Wm. Crookes and Mr. F. W. H. Myers, leaders of the Psychical Research society, have answered "yes." But other members, equally eminent as scientific thinkers, answer "no."

They remind us that telepathy is as yet very imperfectly understood. Who knows but what these wonderful phenomena manifested by the trance-medium, Mrs. Piper, (absolutely proved to be free from fraud and illusion) may yet be explained by telepathy or some other known psychic force akin to it? At any rate, while suspending judgment let us beware of the popular assertion that the whole subject is beyond the reach of demonstration. In a universe the size of this, with all its wonders and the mind of man most wonderful of all, we should be very modest and not too free in asserting what is possible and what impossible. The prayer of Ajax was for light. There can be no worthier prayer.

THE WORLD'S DEBT TO SPIRITUALISM.

(February 10th.)

Everyone familiar with the alleged reports from the spirit-world concerning its character knows that they all are strikingly similar. All mediums report substantially the same messages regarding the nature of the future life. These messages, moreover, are all liberal in their thought, so that whatever else Spiritualism has done it has helped to rid men's minds of religious notions that are obsolete, archaic and untrue. Spiritualism has liberalized religious thought and insisted on the necessity of evidence before believing any doctrine whatsoever. But the greatest service that this movement has rendered the race is the rationalizing of men's ideas as to the character of life after death. Let us contrast the new thought on this subject, as presented by Spiritualism, with the old thought, as it still stands today in the creeds of Christendom.

First—As to the process of immortalization: The old thought is that after death the soul sleeps till the resurrection morning, then reenters the body and both pass into life eternal. This reunion science has demonstrated is an absolute impossibility, yet many still believe in it. We find it in the Episcopal service for the burial of the dead. What wonder that

the Rev. Heber Newton, the foremost of progressive Episcopalians, should plead for the removal of that false sentence from the prayer-book touching this belief. The new thought is that the body decomposes at death and the soul takes on a psychic body—an idea against which science has nothing to say, because she knows of substances so tenuous that our senses cannot recognize them.

"Second—As to the nature of death: The traditional teaching is that death is a symbol of the 'wrath of God,' introduced into the world because of man's original disobedience. The new teaching is that death is simply part of the natural, divine, wise and loving order of the universe. Nor does death determine our destiny, as has been taught. There is nothing in the nature of death to change our character one way or the other. What we were immediately before death, that we are immediately after death. The process of character-building goes on from the point where we left off at death. We go into just so much of heaven or of hell as we have in ourselves.

Third—Heaven and Hell, according to the old teaching, are far off and far apart. Hell has been located in the bowels of the earth, and, also in some dark, far-away planet. Heaven has been located in some land of the setting sun, the 'isles of the blessed.' Jesus thought of heaven as the abode of God, the angels, Enoch and Elijah. All the dead went to sheol, the under-world, which had its two sections, paradise and gehenna, near together, as we learn from the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Later, the life after death was located above the blue dome. Then came modern astronomy, showing that the earth moved, so that people could no more speak of heaven as being "up" because what is "up" at noon is "down" at midnight. The tendency of modern thought is to place the spirit-world, including good and bad, very near our earth, "enveloping it as an atmosphere."

Fourth—The judgment day, according to Orthodoxy, occurs on the resurrection day, when the big book will be opened and each soul's destiny decreed. But the new teaching is that we do not wait for God to reward or punish us; we do so ourselves every time we keep or break any of the laws of health and happiness. The judgment day is every day, every moment, according as we violate the laws on which physical, moral or spiritual health depends.

Fifth—According to the traditional teaching reunions of families and friends are by no means assured because it is not always the case that every member of a family goes to heaven, nor, again, that hell claims them all. But the new

teaching, set forth by Spiritualism with great force and beauty, is that there are homes hereafter as here, and that as surely as our identity is preserved, so surely shall the broken ties be reknit.

Sixth—The old thought of the hereafter is strangely devoid of provision for our occupation in the life to come. The great masterpieces of religious art, the hymns, prayers, sermons of the Christian church, all unite in presenting the future life as a condition of idleness—nothing to do but to sing psalms and play harps. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps did a great service when she broke up this old conventional idea of heaven and pictured it as at least a desirable abode. For no one, pausing to think, could wish for a heaven in which there is nothing to do but to sing.

There must be opportunity for the exercise of our highest powers, the powers of thought, affection, will; or else there can be no good reason for desiring immortality. If it be objected that without a brain these powers are nothing, the answer is that the latest word of science on the subject is that brain is not the cause of thought, but simply that brain-activity accompanies thought. Thought, therefore, may exist without the aid of a brain, and, as science admits, the ego may not cease to exist when the brain is resolved to dust.

My objection, then, to the orthodox hell is that it makes God more cruel and unjust than any Satan. My objection to the orthodox heaven is that it is uninteresting, affording no opportunity for the exercise of our highest faculties.

Such, in brief, is the old and the new thought regarding the nature and character of the future life. The new thought roots itself in the fact of evolution and is properly inferred from that fact. The new thought, moreover, is perfectly rational and comforting and in no way contradicts the conclusions of science.

MODERN THEOSOPHY AND ITS FOUNDRESS

(February 17th)

All representative Theosophists agree in defining Theosophy as divine wisdom, knowledge of God and the soul and their relation; knowledge, moreover, that has been esoterically (secretly) preserved from time immemorial by "adepts" in the understanding of it, and transmitted by them from generation to generation, to be exoterically (openly) revealed at certain intervals, according to "cyclic law," by means of "messengers" or "great teachers," who make known to the world that portion of adept-knowledge vouchsafed to them for the enlightenment and upliftment of mankind.

Now in 1875 occurred one of

these cyclic-law-intervals when "the brothers" (i e. Adepts, or Mahatmas) divulged as much of the secret doctrine as their "messenger," Madame Blavatsky, could safely reveal without its being used for other than altruistic purposes. No fairly tale of Grimm is more marvelous than the story which Countess Wachtmeister tells of the origin of the modern Theosophical movement under Madame Blavatsky.

According to this account, it appears that in 1851 Madame Blavatsky incidentally met in London a handsome Hindu, who informed her that she was, by reason of her psychic powers, her intellectual ability and her eastern birth to act as the "messenger" to the world of secret doctrine; that after studying in Thibet and Egypt under Mahatmas, she should go to America and there seek out a Colonel Olcott, who would be the president of the Theosophical society. Doing as she was bidden, this Russian lady, in August, 1874, found the aforesaid gentleman studying Spiritualism at Chittenden, Vt. Having demonstrated that she could produce these spiritualistic phenomena by will-power alone and having given Colonel Olcott proofs of the authenticity of her mission, they, with fourteen others met and organized in September, 1875, at New York, the Theosophical Society.

The new movement grew rapidly, due chiefly to the rare organizing genius of Madame Blavatsky and to the wide circulation secured for her two typical books, "Isis Unveiled" and "Secret Doctrine."

When we recall the fact that modern Theosophy sets up brotherhood as its cardinal and binding principle, and then recall the schisms, dissentions and feuds that have darkened the twenty-six years' history of the movement, we cannot but regard these factions and disruptions as a most pathetic, melancholy commentary on the fundamental doctrine of brotherhood. And if the movement has lost its original vigor the explanation of it is to be found chiefly in these ugly facts.

The Theosophical movement, whether in the parent society, or in either of its sects, stands for three objects, variously phrased. These are: (1) To form a nucleus of universal brotherhood without any distinctions whatever; (2) to promote the study of Aryan and other Oriental religions, philosophies, literatures, and to demonstrate the importance of such study; (3) to investigate the unexplained laws of nature and the psychic or divine powers latent in man. We have in this statement a creed of at least two articles. First, belief in the existence of latent psychic powers and second, belief in the importance of studying Orientalisms. But many who have studied these systems

are satisfied that there is no practical importance attaching to the study of them, apart from the ethical and spiritual precepts that have been culled there-from and published years ago. And, as for latent psychic powers, there are some alleged powers the very existence of which is questioned by scientific experts. There is, then, too much creed in Theosophy to enable every one to become identified with the movement.

Theosophists say that their movement arose according to the "cyclic law" that governs the periodic revelation of secret doctrine by the "adept" to the "great teachers," Madame Blavatsky being the latest of these. But a simpler and quite adequate explanation of this movement appears the moment we recall the religious condition of England and America just before 1875, when Theosophy was organized. In 1859 Darwin's "Origin of Species" appeared, and being dimly understood, was branded "atheistic." In 1860 Spencer's doctrine of the "Unknowable" was published. In 1868 Huxley delivered his famous lecture on "The Physical Basis of Life," criticized at the time as "materialistic." And in 1874 Tyndall's "Belfast Address" created a tremendous sensation, seeming to uphold a materialistic philosophy. The direct effect of all this was to unsettle the religious convictions of thousands, and among them Mrs. Besant, who had already thought herself out of Christianity into Materialism. At this crisis Madam Blavatsky appeared saying, "Humanity is stretching out its hands for philosophy that will satisfy. The Far East furnishes it. Gradually the conviction is dawning on Spencer and Tyndall that the Unknowable can be known only by the Aryan secret doctrine." By thus pointing to the far east, Madam Blavatsky sought, even as had Spiritualism, by the doctrine of spirit-intercourse, to stem the tide of agnosticism and materialism. And in so far as Theosophy represents an honest attempt to find a way out of agnosticism and materialism it deserves the honor and respect of all mankind.

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